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## Crime & Court

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# Prosecutors hit the streets

Attorney General Beau Biden says program is like 'community policing'

BY ADAM TAYLOR • THE NEWS JOURNAL • APRIL 29, 2008

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WILMINGTON -- In response to a wave of homicides in the city, state prosecutors have been picking up night and weekend shifts as part of a crackdown on crime, Delaware [Attorney General](#) Beau Biden said Monday.

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Biden told more than 100 residents at the monthly meeting of the West Side Crime Group at the Claymore Senior Center that his office's role in the ramped-up law enforcement has resulted in an impromptu expansion of his Community Prosecutions Program, which has been taking place in the city's Southbridge community since last summer.

The program, which assigns prosecutors to geographic zones, is designed to work hand-in-hand with community policing efforts by getting a prosecutor involved with the case very early on and keeping him or her on the case until its over. By getting out into the community, Biden hopes the prosecutors will learn which cases are important to residents and the arresting officers.

"It's just like community policing," Biden said. "We need to get out in the community more. You are how we learn who to go after."

Since April 18, when Wilmington police reacted to a surge in murders by announcing that more officers would be put in high-crime areas, a prosecutor has been at Justice of the Peace Court No. 20 at Fourth and Walnut streets from 6 to 10 p.m. Tuesdays through Saturdays to meet people who get arrested.

Statistics from that shift weren't available Monday night, but Deputy Attorney General Josette Manning said that judges have agreed to most of the prosecutor's request for high bail amounts.

Biden said he's glad the program has gone citywide -- and said he expects it to be implemented throughout the county in a little more than a month.

Biden said his office is short-staffed, so prosecutors regularly go to court with paperwork from 50 cases under their arms and often view a case for the first time when they enter the courtroom.

"It's not good," he said. "If a law firm ran its business that way, they'd go out of business."

Sometimes three or more prosecutors work on the same case as it goes through the system. The Community Prosecutions program tries to get one prosecutor on the case from the beginning.

Paul Falkowski, a teacher who is looking for work, said he's not only fed up with the violence in the city -- there have been 11 murders here compared with only three at the same time last year and 14 in all of 2007 -- he's also had enough of people who feel bad for the criminals.

"That's why I'm here tonight," he said. "I'm tired of people defending the criminal. People are saying, 'hire a felon,' when I'm looking for work myself."

Biden said felons should be hired by private industry. Others in the audience agreed with him.

Some thought he doesn't go far enough to help ex-offenders. Dwight Davis, who helps inmates get pardons; Marla Garris, who has received a pardon and plans to run for City Council this year; and Maria Matos, executive Director of the Latin American Community Center, all said prosecutors shouldn't block pardon attempts for prisoners who deserve a second chance.

Samuel Lee said technology should be used to prevent crime.

"It's time for somebody to get ... the money for the cameras and get them up," he said.

But Odelia D'Souza, who owns a travel agency at Fourth and Scott streets, said the extra officers have helped.

"There have been more police for sure, which I think sends the message to criminals that the city and the people in the neighborhood care about what's going on here," she said.

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